

*If 'mantra' or 'yantra' is not for you, the secret of 'Sri Vidya' can come to you through the rich, elegant, captivating songs, called....*

## NAVAVARANA KIRTANAS

*by: B. Rajam Aiyar*

Muthuswami Dikshitar's devotional outpourings to Goddess Kamalaambika which took shape as the famous *Navavarana Kirtanas* (songs) make a treasure house of Carnatic music. The nine songs expound the secret of *Sri Vidya* which includes all ways of worship and excludes none.

*Navavarana Puja* to Sri Chakra is the foremost *sadhana* of *Sri Vidya* and Dikshitar's songs give shape to it in words set to divine music. By singing these songs with proper *bhava* (attitude), one will get the full benefit of formal *Navavarana Puja*.

Muthuswami Dikshitar was one of the three outstanding vocal musicians of recent times (1775-1835) from South India who has imparted joy to millions of people. His wonderful compositions and inspired songs were all dedicated to glorify the Supreme Being.

Dikshitar had his initial training under his father Ramaswami Dikshitar in the time-honored way and became an adept in the *lakshya* and *lakshana* (objectives) of music.

### Influence of Yogi

Early in life he came under the influence of a *Mahatma*, known as Chidambaranatha Yogi who took him to Varanasi. There he was initiated into the subtleties of *mantra* and *tantra* sastras. He learnt Hindustani music as well.

Then he returned to the South and took refuge under "Guru Guha" in *Tiruttani Kshetra*. The inspiration which he derived there led him to compose his songs with the insignia of "Guru Guha".

His next place of pilgrimage was Tiruvarur, known as Sripuram where the presiding deity is Kamalaambika. It is here that he was wholly inspired under the influence of the goddess to compose nine *kirtanas* in captivating *ragas*. Fortunate indeed are those who can sing these *kritis* mastering the nuances of the art and feeling the elevation of spirit.

### Kirtanas Meaningful

After invoking Maha Ganapati and Bala Subrahmanya in two introductory songs and adding a Devi *dhyana Kirtana*, Dikshitar sang the *Navavarana Kirtanas* and concluded with a *Mangala Kirtana* on the goddess in Sri Raga. Altogether there are 13 *Kirtanas* in the series. Full meaning of the first and summary

meanings of the other eight important *Kirtanas* on Devi are given here.

**"Kamalaamba Samrakshatu"**  
**Raga: Ananda Bhairavi Talam: Misra Chapu**



**Meaning of the First Kirtana:**

*She who is in my heart and enshrined in Kamalangara, who is worshipped by Devas and pure-minded devotees, and whose mind shines like a lotus, who is the beloved consort of Sundareswara, who grants the enjoyment of Brahmananda, who is like a beautiful parrot in the cage of Pranava, who is presiding deity of the nine Avarana chakras, beginning with Tripura, the ten siddhis, the eight Matrika Devis, 15 Nitya Devis, Kameswari, who is the Prakata Yogini and the empress of Bhupura known as Trailokya-Mohana-Chakra, who is destroyer of Mahishasura and other enemies of Devas, whose glory is proclaimed in Vedas Puranas, who is Tripuresi, Mother of Guru Guha, consort of Kameswara, sister of Maha Vishnu, who is Maheswari, Tripurasundari — May she protect me.*

1. The Kirtana begins with "Kamalaamba Samrakshatu". Raga Ananda Bhairavi, Talam Misra Chapu. Avarana: "Trailokya Mohana"; Chakreswari

Tripura, Prakata Yogini.

2. The Kirtana, with "Kamalaambaam". *Raga Kalyani, Adi Talam. Avarana: "Sarvasa Paripooraka";* Chakreswari Tripuresi, Gupta Yogini.

### Order to Mind

In this *Kriti* Dikshitar asks his own mind to meditate on Goddess Kamalaambika and get freed from bondage. The goddess is the very embodiment of vibrant life and ultimate truth. Dweller in Kamalapura and destroyer of the demon *Bhandasura*, the charming goddess with lotus face and lovely tresses is joy incarnate. This consort of Siva, praised by other goddesses and worshipped by sage Durvasa, will dispel grief and grant all wishes and salvation.

3. The Kirtana, "Sri Kamalambikaya". *Raga Sankarabharanam, Rupaka Talam. Avarana: "Sarva Sankshobhana";* Chakreswari Tripurasundari, Guptatara Yogini.

With Devi's grace, Dikshitar sees himself as ultimate Brahman, enjoying full and eternal bliss. She is worshipped by Manmatha, the Lord of love, and by the Devas. She is the embodiment of the Veda Mahavakya. Her mercy is infinite.

4. The Kirtana, "Kamalaambikayai". *Raga Kambodi, Adi Talam. Avarana: "Sarva Soubhagya Dayakam";* Chakreswari Tripuravasini, Sampradaya Yogini.

Here Dikshitar bows to the eternal Devi, the sister of Vishnu and the consort of Siva. She is also Himavan's daughter, and is called Aparna and Suparna. She is worshipped through the esoteric mantra, *Hrim*. She is the mother of all creatures, the destroyer of all sins, and is bedecked with jewels, golden brocades and fragrant betels, Her lotus feet bestow grace on all.

5. The Kirtana, "Sri Kamalaambayaah". *Raga Bhaivavi, Misrajamba Talam. Avarana: "Sarvartha Sadhakam";* Chakreswari Tripura Sri Kulotheerna Yogini.

### Creator of Elements

With awe, Dikshitar wonders who can equal Devi, who is superior even to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. She creates the five elements, is the essence of light and sound. It is her grace that lends life and energy to primordial Maya and Avidya that are the cause of this phenomenal universe.

6. The Kirtana, "Kamalaambikaayaa". *Raga*

*Punnagavarali, Tisra Eka Talam. Avarana: "Sarva Rakshakaram"; Chakreswari Tripura Malini and Nigarbha Yogini.*

Calling himself as Devi's devotee, Dikshitar praises her Kundalini power with its tenfold energies and the tenfold actions, all of which she enfolds within herself. She taught Lord Siva, and was worshipped by Dararatha. Highly regarded as Tripura Malini, she is fond of music and confers wealth and grace on the devotees.

7. The *Kirtana*, " Sri Kamalaambi-kaayam". *Raga Sahana, Tisra Triputa Talam. Avarana: "Rogaharam"; Chakreswari Tripura Siddha, Rahasya Yogini.*

### **Terror to Wicked**

The composer expresses his devotion to Devi who grants all boons to those who take refuge in her and brings joy to gods, sages and men alike. She is also a terror to the wicked. With lotus eyes and face bright like the full moon, and feet worshipped by Indira, she is the embodiment and deity of the Mantra, *Hrim*. She is the Yogini with veena in hand and can dispel all ills.

8. The *Kirtana*, "Sri Kamalaambike". *Raga Ghanta, Adi Talam. Avarana: The Central Triangle called "Sarva Siddhi Pradam"; Chakreswari Tripuramba, Atirahasya Yogini.*

Dikshitar implores protection from Devi, who carries the flower arrow and other weapons, as also the parrot in her hand. She protects all the worlds and confers wealth on all. Known as Tripuraamba and Balaambika, and golden in color, she dispels all sorrows and gives joy and ultimate deliverance. Lord Vishnu and Subrahmanya understand her greatness.

9. The *Kirtana*, " Sri Kamalaamba Jayati". *Raga Ahiri, Tisra Eka Talam. Avarana: The Central Bindu called "Sarva Ananda Mayam"; Chakreswari Maha Tripurasundari, Paraparati Rahasya Yogini.*

### **Grace From Listening**

Here Kamalaambika is great. She can explain *Brahmamaya kosa*, names and forms, *kama kala* equanimity. She is the mother of all the worlds, she has the moon's crescent representing knowledge, she is the indweller of chintamani mansion. Ever auspicious. She is the Supreme Devi seated on Sivakama's lap in the innermost circle, the central *bindu* inside the Sri Chakra.

In the concluding *mangala kirtana*, Dikshitar implores Goddess Kamalaambika to protect him.

Those who sing and hear these songs and with love and devotion will attain the goal of life by the grace of the Divine Mother.

*Vidwan B. Rajam Aiyar is the Principal of the Music Academy College, Madras, and a top ranking musician. He is the recipient of many awards. The Music Academy, Madras had conferred on him the title Sangeeta Kalanidhi in 1987.*

**-Tattvaloka Vol. 10 No. 4 (1987)**

Note: Smt. Bhavani Rao & Party rendered the Kirtanas during this year's Navaratri at Sharada Temple, in Stroudsburg.

